suspected of some secret crime, an extraordinary reverse of fortune is thought sufficient to establish it. If great and apparently lasting prosperity is suddenly changed into unexpected adversity, it is thought to be in righteous retribution for some act of fraud or dishonesty; and men begin to search for cases in which he defrauded the orphan, or overreached the simple, or gratified his own selfishness at the expense of the public good. It is not at the time when prosperity is disposed to smile on the individual, that these insinuations are made and pass current: at these moments, men have not the courage boldly to face the culprit and denounce the crime; but, like cowards, they wait till he has been laid prostrate by the hand of another; they only persecute those whom the Lord has already smitten, and hasten to add reproach to misery, and insult to suffering.

But still, we may in some cases confidently discover the judgments of God. There are certain physical evils which proceed directly from sin—as the poverty which follows extravagance, and the disease which springs from intemperance and other vices; and we are only referring the effect to its cause when we connect the two together. In other cases, also, the connexion, being always of a moral or religious character, may be so visible as at once to compel every man to discover the overruling arrangements of heaven, in making physical events encourage the good or punish the evil. But, in all such cases, both facts must be ascertained, and each on its own independent evidence, before the relation can be discovered. We must not conclude that any given deed is sinful, merely because it has been followed by certain prejudicial consequences. But when the deed is proved to be sinful on other evidence, we may connect the two together, for it looks as if God had connected them. We are not to conclude that any individual has been guilty of secret or highly aggravated sin, merely because he has been

exposed to affliction. This was the error of the friends of Job, and for which they were severely reprimanded. But when he is known, on independent evidence, to have sinned, we are warranted, whether the sin be physically connected with the suffering or no, in tracing a connexion appointed by God himself.

It is comparatively seldom that we have such a minute acquaintance with every incident in the past life of a neighbour, as to be able to determine the precise end contemplated in any